



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE PAY-AS-YOU-GO ESTIMATE

October 24, 2000

H.R. 4068 **Religious Workers Act of 2000**

As cleared by the Congress on October 19, 2000

Enacting this legislation would affect direct spending by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Department of State, and for a number of other federal programs, but CBO estimates that the act would have no significant net impact on such spending in any year.

H.R. 4068 would reinstate through October 1, 2003, the authorization for special immigrant visas for persons who work in certain religious vocations. This authorization expired on October 1, 2000. CBO estimates that the reestablishment of this category of visas would result in about 5,000 additional visas being issued each year. This estimate is based on trends in the number of religious workers and their families who have entered the United States in recent years.

Because the INS would charge a fee of \$110 for each person that applies for the special immigrant visa, we estimate that the agency would collect about \$550,000 annually in additional fees. The INS is authorized to spend such fees without further appropriation, and we expect that most of the money would be spent in the year in which it is collected. Thus, the net impact on INS spending would be negligible.

Increasing the number of visas issued also would increase collections by the Department of State. Under current law, a fee of \$45 per person is deposited as an offsetting collection and is available for spending on consular affairs. CBO estimates that the Department of State would collect and spend up to \$225,000 each year and that the net budgetary impact would be negligible.

Finally, some of the additional immigrants could become eligible for certain federal public benefits. CBO expects that any increase in direct spending for these benefit programs would not be significant.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Mark Grabowicz (for INS costs), Sunita D'Monte (for Department of State costs), and Valerie Baxter (for benefit costs). This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.